

More Protection from Pilgrim Power Plant

House Bills Seek Money for Air Monitors

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Duxbury's top officials are backing four legislative bills up for consideration at the State House this week that would provide residents with better protection from the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant in Plymouth. The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to support all four bills: two would provide more funding to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to pay for its monitoring programs and its emergency planning expenses and the two other bills would increase the radiological emergency planning zone around Pilgrim from its current ten-mile radius.

The Duxbury Nuclear Advisory Committee traveled to the State House Tuesday to give testimony on the four bills. On Monday at the selectmen's meeting, committee co-chair Mary "Pixie" Lampert said all four bills would be beneficial. "The four bills are definitely in the best interest of the Town of Duxbury," she said. House bill 1899 would raise the amount of money that Pilgrim's owner, Entergy, pays the Department of Public Health to oversee the nuclear plant from a maximum of \$180,000 to no less than \$400,000 per nuclear facility. Lampert said the department is currently being "short-changed."

"It addresses the fact that the MDPH has insufficient funds to be able to perform its legislatively-required monitoring and surveillance obligations in communities likely to be affected by emissions from Pilgrim, Vermont Yankee and Seabrook," wrote Lampert and co-chair Rebecca Chin in a memo to selectmen. "These monitoring responsibilities are important so that Massachusetts citizens are assured that their health and safety are protected from the potential harmful effects of ionizing radiation from daily operations and in the event of an accident."

Lampert said that the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission has found offsite environmental monitoring of regional nuclear power plants to be inadequate. The public health department's budget for monitoring the nuclear plants has been cut "year after year," she said, but Entergy can well afford to pay the state more.

"They definitely need the money and \$400,000 for a licensee is peanuts when they're making close to \$12 billion," said Lampert.

Entergy reported revenues of \$10.3 billion from Pilgrim and Yankee in 2013 and is expected to post \$11.5 billion in revenues for 2014, according to Lampert's memo.

The second bill is House 2030. This would provide more money to the MDPH for its real-time air monitoring system. It seeks no less than \$400,000 per reactor for both Pilgrim and Seabrook to cover the costs of purchasing, installing and maintaining real-time air monitoring stations in communities affected by Pilgrim and Seabrook.

“We deserve to know what’s being emitted on a daily basis,” Lampert said, adding that the MDPH’s current system of twelve air monitors around Pilgrim is limited and too close to the reactor – only a half mile to a mile and a half around the power plant. There are no monitors near Seabrook.

Duxbury paid \$18,000 for its own air monitor last year, which is located at Mattakeesett Court.

“It’s like a neighborhood watch. It will keep the licensee on its toes,” said Lampert.

The two other bills would increase the radiological emergency planning zone from its current ten-mile radius. House 1898 would make it a 20-mile radius and House 2031 would make it a 50-miles radius. This larger planning zone would provide more emergency planning protections - including monitoring and stockpiling potassium iodide – for more people, who would then be evacuated if there was a nuclear accident. The 50-mile radius would include towns in Barnstable, Dukes, Nantucket counties and Cape Anne in Essex County.

All four bills are backed by 12th Plymouth district Representative Tom Calter. 6th Plymouth district representative Josh Cutler supports three of the four. He chose to back the bill seeking the 50-mile radius expansion instead of the 20-mile one.

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